Pennsylvania. Province of. Society of Friends.

REPRESENTATION

ON BEHALF OF THE

PEOPLE called QUAKERS,

TO THE

PRESIDENT and EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,

AND THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA, &c.

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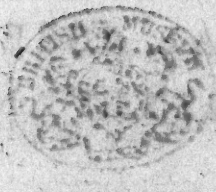

hiladelphia, 6th of 12th Month, 1781.

On the 26th Ult. a Committee of ſix
ends, by appointment, waited on the
ſident of the Executive Council, and the
aker of the General Aſſembly, with
ies of the following Repreſentation, to
ueſt the favour of them to lay the ſame
re each of the Public Bodies at which
reſpectively preſided; which they
gingly undertook, and it is now printed
the uſe of the Members of our own
ety, and the information of others who
unacquainted with our religious prin-
s.

To the PRESIDENT and EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, the GENERAL ASSEMBLY of PENNSYLVANIA, and others whom it may concern;

The following Repreſentation on Behalf of the People called QUAKERS.

SHEWETH,

THAT the outrages and violences committed on the property, and on divers of the perſons of the inhabitants of Philadelphia, of our religious ſociety, by companies of licentious people parading the ſtreets, deſtroying the windows and doors of our houſes, breaking into and plundering ſome of them, on the evening of the 24th of laſt month, encreaſes the occaſion of our preſent addreſs to you who

are in the exerciſe of the powers of civil government, which is in itſelf honourable and originally inſtituted for the ſupport of publick peace and good order, and the preſervation of the juſt rights of the people.

Although we believe that moſt of you are not unacquainted with our religious principles in general, and the reaſons of our diſſent from other profeſſed Chriſtians, in divers matters relating to faith and practice; yet as ſuch riotous proceedings are ſhameful to the Chriſtian name, and diſhonourable to government, and many of us have ſuffered great loſs and damage, we apprehend it our duty to bring into your view the grounds of our not complying with the vain modes of rejoicing, in which many indulge themſelves; as alſo for the information of others, who through miſapprehenſion or prejudice, too freely attribute our conduct to obſtinacy and a party ſpirit, and are thus prompted wrongfully to judge and condemn us.

It therefore appears to us requiſite to put you and them in mind, that at the beginning of the reformation, a few centuries paſt, the day of the Lord gradually broke forth in divers nations of Europe, raiſing up pious men to declare againſt the groſs

groſs ſuperſtitions and impoſitions, contrary to the nature and ſpirit of Chriſtianity, which for many ages had prevailed, and enabling them to ſtand faithful, many of them even unto death, according to the diſcoveries of duty made known to them, in that revival of goſpel dawn on their minds. And in proceſs of time it pleaſed Almighty God further to cauſe his glorious day of light to advance, and the Sun of Righteouſneſs to ſhine in great brightneſs, whereby not only the groſs, but alſo the more ſpecious as well as minute branches of corruption were manifeſted to our worthy anceſtors: which divine principle of light and truth we alſo profeſs.

In this manifeſtation of goſpel light they clearly ſaw, and many of us are now alſo firmly convinced, among other important truths, that the luſts of ambition, avarice, envy, and emulation, from whence wars, ſtrife, and contention about earthly things proceed, are the fruits of the depravity and corruption of the human heart, which muſt be expelled and eradicated in the ſpiritual work of Chriſtian redemption; and they not only ſaw that they muſt ceaſe from outward hoſtilities, but that their converſation and conduct muſt be conſiſtent with the

the doctrine and precepts of the goſpel; that as they could not join with others in ſhedding the blood of their fellow-men, for whom Chriſt died, "and who came "to ſave mens lives, and not to deſtroy "them;" neither could they unite in rejoicing for the advantages gained by ſuch bloodſhed. As they could not fight with the fighters, neither could they triumph with the conquerors; and therefore they were not to be prevailed upon to make a ſhew of conformity in ſuch rejoicings, by placing lights in any part of the fronts of their houſes, or other compliances of the like nature and tendency; well knowing the levity and folly attending ſuch things to be inconſiſtent with religious gravity and ſobriety, and with that godly fear and reverence, which ought at all times to dwell on the minds of thoſe who profeſs to be followers of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

It was likewiſe ſhewed to them in the ſame divine light, as well as by the doctrine of the holy ſcriptures, that the ſons of God were led by the ſpirit of God, and that all voluntary humility and will-worſhip muſt be laid aſide by them; and therefore they could not ſubject themſelves in the worſhip of Almighty God to the will

will and commands of men; and, as they were redeemed from insincerity, they could not dissemble by seeming to conform, when in heart and spirit they did not; and therefore continued to open their shops, and follow their lawful occupations on days appointed by human authority for the observation of publick fasts, feasts, and thanksgivings, as usual on other days. This was their constant conscientious practice, that they might stand clear in the discharge of their duty towards God; and with intent that others, through their example, might be induced to reflect upon the vanity and impropriety of those observances and tumults, and their incoherence with the inward life, spirit, and virtue of true religion and Christian sobriety.

And notwithstanding they were charged with being actuated by a spirit of singularity, obstinacy, and a desire to be contrary to others, yet they demonstrated, that in whatsoever they could comply, agreeable to good conscience, they were ready to do it. Thus they concurred with the propriety and decency of other professed Christians, in appropriating the first day of the week for the performance of publick worship; believing it also to be their duty

duty to ſuſpend their attention to their outward concerns on other days, and to meet often together, according to the practice of the primitive Chriſtians, for the like pious purpoſes.

It is not from imitation, or for the ſupport of ancient euſtom, but from a conviction of judgment, that we are led to the ſame practice with our anceſtors; being firmly perſuaded that the holy ſpirit will in like manner lead and guide ſuch who are faithful to its dictates, in their conduct and converſation among men, and eſpecially in matters of faith and worſhip: and therefore we can neither really worſhip, nor put on any part of the appearance thereof, merely in conformity to the injunctions of human authority; believing it our duty rather to ſhew our neighbours by our practice, that in this goſpel day the holy ſpirit hath led us out of the formality of publick faſts, which though in practice under the Jewiſh diſpenſation, it does not appear that they are enjoined on Chriſtians, either by precept or example from the New Teſtament: Chriſt himſelf in his ſpiritual appearance, being the teacher of his people, and when he leads them to faſt, he directs that it be in private, and that they appear not unto men to faſt

faſt *. This we believe to be our duty as a people, to bear conſtant and open teſtimony unto, and alſo to maintain it fully, and not in part only; leſt by falling ſhort therein, we ſhould deny Chriſt our Lord before men, whom we ought to acknowledge before all, and who hath ſaid, "Whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in heaven."

Our forefathers, under full conviction of the rectitude of their principles, and uprightneſs of their intentions, of which they had given indubitable proofs, through a long ſeries of ſevere perſecution in their native land, born with much firmneſs and Chriſtian patience, became at length intruſted with, and intitled to, many valuable extenſive rights and privileges; which induced them, at their own expence, to encounter the dangers of the ſeas, and many other hazards and difficulties, to ſettle and improve this country, at that time a wilderneſs; having firſt, in concert with their much beloved friend, the wiſe William Penn, formed ſuch a conſtitution of government, as gave the moſt promiſing proſpect of ſecuring to themſelves, and their poſterity, the free and full enjoyment

* Mat. vi. 16, 17, 18.

of

of liberty of conſcience; which they preferred to all temporal conſiderations, and were conſtantly careful to preſerve not only to themſelves, but to all perſons of every other religious denomination, who dwelt among them: and for a conſiderable number of years the adminiſtration of the laws was chiefly committed to men of the ſame liberal principles; that by the Divine bleſſing on their pious concern for the preſent and future proſperity and happineſs of the people, piety and virtue were promoted and encouraged, vice and irreligion were diſcountenanced, peace, harmony, and concord prevailed, and the enjoyment of religious and civil liberty was inviolably preſerved. Thus Pennſylvania became celebrated for the mildneſs and liberal temper of its government, and great numbers of ſober perſons of tender conſciences, of different religious profeſſions, found a quiet retreat from the oppreſſion and perſecution to which they had been ſubjected in various parts of Europe.

It muſt therefore appear ſtrange and extraordinary, in the view of candid inquirers, that ſo evident a change and contraſt have taken place; and that we, many of whom are the deſcendants of the firſt ſetlers, profeſſing the ſame religious prin-

ciples,

ciples, and connected in intereſt, affection, and duty, to the real good and welfare of our country, who have never forfeited our birth-right, ſhould now be vilified, perſecuted, impriſoned, and excluded from our juſt liberties and privileges, not only by laws which have been calculated to oppreſs us, and the execution of them, in ſome places, committed to men of avaricious, profligate principles, who have made a prey of the innocent and induſtrious, to the great loſs and damage of ſome, and the almoſt ruin of others; but ſcurrilous publications, and other invidious means uſed by our adverſaries, to calumniate and reproach us with opprobrious names, in order to inflame the minds of the ignorant, and impoſe on the credulous to our prejudice; when, upon an impartial, candid examination, we truſt it will appear, that in the courſe of the commotions which have unhappily prevailed, no juſt cauſe of offence will be found againſt us in the general, but that we have endeavoured to maintain our peaceable religious principles, to preſerve a good conſcience towards God, and to manifeſt our good-will to all men.

We are not incited by party views or vindictive motives, in this Repreſentation, but

but to awaken your cool and diſpaſſionate attention to our multiplied ſufferings, and the abuſes we have received; knowing that magiſtracy is intended for a terror to evil doers, and an encouragement to the virtuous; but where the neceſſary care and exertions are not uſed for the prevention and ſuppreſſion of profanity, tumults and outrage, and a virtuous part of the community are oppreſſed and inſulted, the true end of government is neglected, and anarchy, confuſion, contempt of authority, and inſecurity to perſons and property will ſucceed; and although publick faſts may be proclaimed, and days under the name of humiliation recommended and appointed, and confeſſion of ſin and tranſgreſſion verbally made, yet, unleſs there be a true and ſincere faſting from ambition, ſtrife, ill-will, animoſities, infidelity, fraud, luxury, revelling, drunkenneſs, oppreſſion, and all manner of evil, it cannot be a faſt, or acceptable day to the Lord; nor can we have a well-grounded hope, that the ſcourge with which the inhabitants have been viſited, will be removed, and days of peace and tranquility reſtored.

The diſpenſation of war, bloodſhed, and calamity which hath been permitted to prevail on this continent is very ſolemn and

and awful; demanding the moſt ſerious and heartfelt attention of all ranks and denominations among the people, individually to conſider and examine, how far we are each of us really and ſincerely engaged to bring forth fruits of true repentance and amendment of life, agreeable to the ſpirit and doctrine of the goſpel. And although we have been expoſed to great abuſe and unchriſtian treatment, we wiſh to be enabled, through the aſſiſtance of divine grace, to cheriſh in ourſelves, and inculcate in others with whom we have an influence, that diſpoſition of forgiveneſs of injuries, enjoined by the precepts and example of Chriſt our holy Lawgiver; and to manifeſt our deſires and endeavours to promote the real good of our country, and that we are

Your Friends.

Signed in and on behalf of a meeting of the Repreſentatives of the ſaid people, held at Philadelphia the 22d day of the 11th month, 1781.

JOHN DRINKER, Clerk.

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